DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 480 858 SP 041 762

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TITLE	Teacher Quality: Understanding the Effectiveness of Teacher Attributes.
INSTITUTION	Economic Policy Inst., Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Spencer Foundation, Chicago, IL.; National Academy of Education, Washington, DC.
ISBN	ISBN-1-932066-06-3
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	64p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Economic Policy Institute, 1660 L Street, N.W., Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20035 ($11.50). Tel: 202-775-8810; Fax: 202-775-0819; e-mail: tevans@epinet.org; Web site: http://www.epinet.org.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available From EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Student Teacher Evaluation; *Teacher Certification; *Teacher Characteristics; Teacher Competencies; *Teacher Effectiveness; Teacher Influence; Teacher Qualifications

ABSTRACT

This literature review outlines five measurable, policy-relevant teacher characteristics that reflect teacher quality: teacher experience, teacher preparation programs and degrees, type of teacher certification, specific coursework taken in preparation for the profession, and teachers' own test scores. It reviews a wide range of empirical studies that examine the impact of teacher characteristics on teacher effectiveness. Overall, several studies find a positive effect of experience on teacher effectiveness. The selectivity/prestige of the institution attended by a teacher has a positive effect on student achievement. Teachers who have earned advanced degrees have a positive impact on high school mathematics and science achievement when degrees earned are in those subjects. Research demonstrates a positive effect of certified teachers on high school mathematics achievement when the certification is in mathematics. Studies show little impact of emergency or alternative route certification on student achievement in mathematics or science compared to standard certification. Teacher coursework in both subject area taught and pedagogy contributes to positive education outcomes. Pedagogical coursework seems to contribute to teacher effectiveness at all grade levels. Tests that assess teachers' literacy levels or verbal abilities are associated with higher levels of student achievement. (Contains 108 references.) (SM)

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